

Message Text

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PAGE 01 NEW DE 09013 041330Z

44

ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 OMB-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15

USIA-15 ACDA-19 EUR-25 RSR-01 /127 W

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R 031310Z AUG 73

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5966

INFO AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY KABUL

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 9013

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IR, IN

SUBJ: INDIAN VIEW OF SWARAN SINGH VISIT TO IRAN

REF: NEW DELHI 8536

1. MEA JOINT SECRETARY FOR WEST ASIA AND NORTH AFRICA, N.P. ALEXANDER, CALLED IN POL COUNSELOR AUGUST 2 TO OFFER BRIEFING ON FONMIN SWARAN SINGH'S VISIT TO IRAN NOW THAT HE HAD READ MEMCONS ON TRIP (REFTEL).

2. ALEXANDER SAID SHAH HAD EMPHASIZED IRANIAN POWER ("WE ARE POWERFUL TODAY, WE WILL BE MUCH MORE POWERFUL IN 10-15 YEARS, AND IN 25 YEARS WE WILL BE AS POWERFUL AS GERMANY OR FRANCE"), SHOWED DESIRE FOR FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH INDIA, SAID HE HAD COUNSELED PAKISTAN TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH INDIA, AND SAID IRAN WOULD NOT STRENGTHEN PAKISTAN IF THE INTEGRITY OF PAKISTAN WAS NOT THREATENED AND PAKISTAN WAS NOT ATTACKED. SHAH SAID THERE WERE MANY
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 NEW DE 09013 041330Z

WAYS IN WHICH INDIA AND IRAN COULD DEVELOP CLOSER ECONOMIC

AND POLITICAL RELATIONS AND SAID THIS SHOULD BE DONE. HE POINTED TO FONMIN KHALATBARI AND SAID, YOU WILL GO TO INDIA. KHALATBARI SAID, "YES".

3. SWARAN SINGH SAID HE AGREED WITH THE SHAH'S EVALUATION OF THE IMPORTANCE OF PAKISTAN'S INTEGRITY AND SAID INDIA WOULD DO EVERYTHING IT COULD TO STRENGTHEN THIS. HE AGREED WITH SHAH ON POSSIBILITY AND DESIRE FOR BETTER INDO-PAK RELATIONS AND URGED MORE FREQUENT CONTACT. HE TOLD BANQUET HE FOUND IT "SHOCKING" THAT KHALATBARI HAD NEVER BEEN TO INDIA, ONLY THREE HOURS AWAY BY PLANE. IN RESPONSE TO A QUERY FROM KHALATBARI ON WHETHER INDIA INTENDED TO STRENGTHEN AND SUPPORT "PRO-COMMUNIST, BAATHIST" REGIME IN IRAQ, SWARAN SINGH SAID FLATLY, "NO".

4. SHAH TOLD SWARAN SINGH THAT COUP IN KABUL WAS "WORRISOME" FOR IRAN BUT THAT IRANIANS INTENDED TO TRY TO MAINTAIN GOOD RELATIONS WITH NEW AFGHAN REGIME. SHAH DID NOT MAKE ANY MENTION OF SOVIETS IN CONNECTION WITH NEW AFGHAN REGIME.

5. THERE IS AN INVITATION OUTSTANDING FOR THE SHAH TO VISIT INDIA AND THIS WAS REITERATED BY SWARAN SINGH BUT THERE ARE NO IMMEDIATE PLANS FOR HIS VISIT. NOVEMBER HAS, HOWEVER, BEEN TENTATIVELY SET FOR FONMIN KHALATBARI TO COME TO INDIA.

6. IN SUM, ALEXANDER SAID THE INDIANS BELIEVED THE VISIT HAD BEEN USEFUL, HAD SET THE STAGE FOR MORE FREQUENT EXCHANGES, AND HAD HELPED TO CLEAR THE AIR. AT THE SAME TIME, HE EMPHASIZED THAT INDIA CONTINUED TO HAVE MANY DOUBTS ABOUT IRANIAN POLICIES AND HAD NOTED CAREFULLY THAT THE SHAH HAD NEVER SAID EXPLICITLY HE WOULD NOT PROVIDE ARMS TO PAKISTAN. HE SAID HE HOPED RELATIONS WOULD NOW IMPROVE BUT INDIA WOULD HAVE TO WAIT AND SEE. AS HE HAS DONE ON THREE SUCCESSIVE OCCASIONS, HE ALSO REFERRED TO CONTINUING IRANIAN PRESS ATTACKS ON INDIA AND SAID HE KEPT A CLIPPING FILE ON HIS DESK TO SHOW TO IRANIAN DIPLOMATS WHEN THEY CAME TO HIS OFFICE, HE WAS VERY DUBIOUS OF THE POL COUNSELOR'S OBSERVATION THAT WE UNDERSTOOD PRESS HANDLING OF INDIA HAD SUBSTANTIALLY IMPROVED IN TEHRAN IN RECENT WEEKS.
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PAGE 03 NEW DE 09013 041330Z

7. COMMENT: ALEXANDER IS NOT A NADMIRER OF THE SHAH WHO HE HINTS HAS MEGOLOMANIACAL TENDENCIES AND OF WHOM HE SPEAKS FROM TIME TO TIME QUITE SNEERINGLY. THIS MAY REFLECT THE VIEW OF SOME OF HIS SUPERIORS BUT WE SUSPECT ALEXANDER HIMSELF IS LAGGING BEHIND IN RESPONDING TO A MORE RELAXED INDIAN GOVERNMENT ATTITUDE TOWARD IRAN.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 03 AUG 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: morefirh
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973NEWDE09013
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS MOYNIHAN
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: NEW DELHI
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730859/aaaabrkl.tel
Line Count: 116
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 73 NEW DELHI 8536
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: morefirh
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 12 DEC 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <12-Dec-2001 by martinml>; APPROVED <10-Jan-2002 by morefirh>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: INDIAN VIEW OF SWARAN SINGH VISIT TO IRAN
TAGS: PFOR, IR, IN
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005